

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal
CONDUCTED BY
CHARLES DICKENS

No. 764. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, JULY 21, 1883.

PRICE TWOPENCE

JENIFER.

BY ANNIE THOMAS (MRS. FENDER-CUDLIP).

CHAPTER IX. JACK'S CONFESSION.

JENIFER had dashed her mother's forlorn hope in Mr. Boldero's intervention to the ground in a few decisive words.

"It's useless appealing to him, mother dear. I have done it twice. I've implored and reasoned, and even tried to coax him to try and influence Jack into giving this girl up. But he must have some very powerful reason for not doing it. He was kind, and sorry, and sympathetic; but he won't, or can't, say a saving word to my brother."

"And your poor father thought all the world of him, trusted him as if he had been his brother."

"So do I—trust him much more than I do either of my brothers now; but I know it's useless looking upon him as an ally. Whatever happens, he will only stand by and see it happen to the boys; and some-way or other, I can't hate him for it, though I feel very angry, and very, very sorry."

"I think Jack will listen to me," his mother said softly. "When he knows that what he purposes doing will bow my grief-stricken head to the ground, he will be my own boy again; he will listen to me."

"That girl won't let him go. I can see it in her bold defiant eyes and manner every time I meet her, and for some reason Effie encourages her in her sauciness, and laughs at her affectations and airs as if they were rather bewitching."

"Effie can have no suspicion of Jack's infatuation?" old Mrs. Ray said questioningly.

"I feel sure she has, and gives it tacit encouragement. Effie has a motive in

most things that she does. The admiration she professes for Minnie Thurtle's good looks before Jack isn't motiveless," Jenifer said indignantly, as she felt how utterly powerless she was to cope with the policy of that superior young person her sister-in-law.

"I think my Jack will listen to me; my boy won't break my heart," his mother said once more, but she did not say it in tones of full assurance.

They found twice that day, and the first fox gave them a good hard run of forty minutes over a stiff country. When they killed, Mr. and Mrs. Ray and Captain Edgcomb were the only riders out of the large field that had started who were up with the hounds.

"As usual, you have the brush, Mrs. Ray," Captain Edgcomb said, as he came abreast of the brilliant and versatile young matron, for whose smiles he had fought valorously in her maiden days.

"I have, for, as usual, I'm in the right place," she cried out in her clear, jubilant, exultant tones, "and, as usual, you're in the wrong one," she added in a whisper. "Why are you not seeing Jenifer home instead of following to-day?"

"Simply because she wouldn't accept my escort."

Hubert was talking to the huntsman, and the pair who had been "sweethearts" once, were virtually alone. But even a rarefied and purified Mrs. Grundy could not have taken exception to the tone of their conversation.

"Do you know I'm beginning to think you're very stupid, and very ungrateful," she said seriously. "I know you like Jenifer, and I give you every opportunity of getting on with her, and you don't do it."

"You're quite right in saying that I like Miss Ray. I like her better than I do anyone I know."

"And better than you have ever liked anyone you have ever known? I'm sure I'm right in saying that, and I'm not in the least bit offended, for I haven't a spark of sentiment about me; no, not a spark of jealous sentiment," she added self-approvingly.

"Certainly you're as free from any folly of the sort as any woman whom it has been my luck to know," he agreed.

"I am; and therefore you ought to attend to my words of wisdom, and think that they're dictated by a pure spirit of reason, when I say you don't make the most of your opportunities with Jenifer."

"You really are my friend in that quarter, Mrs. Ray?"

"I really am," she said, turning her face fully towards him, in order that he might clearly read its eloquent expression.

"Is it liking for me, or hatred of anyone else?" he asked.

"Well, it's not 'hatred' of anyone else, but in a measure it's dread of someone else. I'm not going to tell you anything about the someone excepting this, that he's a man for whom I would throw over fifty Captain Edgecumbs."

Her pliant figure leant forward as she spoke, and her bright fair face shone upon him, and he remembered the day so well when such a gesture and such a look from her would have sent the blood coursing through his veins. But this day he only looked at her admiringly, and felt very grateful to her for the interest she expressed in his interest in Jenifer Ray.

"Won't you give me a hint as to who is my rival?" he asked.

"Indeed I won't; besides, I'm only suspicious, not sure, that he is your rival; at any rate, he's not a declared one, and in order to further your cause, and keep the field clear for you, I've pretended to take a dislike to him, and won't have him asked to Moor Royal."

"You're a valuable ally, Mrs. Ray; in return for your kindness I'll venture to give you a hint that you may act upon and save the Ray family a good deal of trouble. That young brother-in-law of yours is making a fool of himself with the gamekeeper's daughter. He was in Exeter with her yesterday, driving her about and shopping openly with her. She'll be Mrs. Jack Ray before his people suspect what he is about, if you don't interfere."

"It's not my duty to interfere with his low tastes and matrimonial schemes," she said; "he has a mother and sister to look after him, and if they're so blind as not to see the danger he's in, I'm not going to turn informer and tell them of it."

"You won't like it if he marries the girl. Remember you're one of the family, and anything that overclouds it will overcloud you. Such a sister-in-law settled at your gates won't be desirable."

"If I find it unpleasant, I'll make Hubert sell Moor Royal; I'm not wedded to the place or to the people about it. Jack's marrying in such a way, and disgracing us all, won't be half a bad excuse for wanting to get away," she said, speaking with her customary careless frankness, and as, just then, her husband rode up to rejoin them, the subject of Jack's probable misalliance dropped.

Meanwhile Minnie Thurtle had gone home, and after briefly relating to her mother what had passed up at the home-farmhouse, she began carefully packing up a rather extensive new wardrobe.

"My dresses will be as handsome as any Mrs. Ray has," she observed with much satisfaction to her mother, "and I shall look quite as well in them as she does in hers. There's no nonsense about her; she and I shall get on well enough, and I don't care about the old woman and Jenifer. There's nothing to get from them, as I shall tell Jack if they cut us and he makes a silly of himself about it."

"I shall never feel happy about it till I see you come out of the church with the ring on your finger," Mrs. Thurtle said anxiously. She was naturally proud of her handsome daughter, and highly gratified at the prospect of seeing her "made a lady of." But she had her maternal qualms about the marriage, as well as old Mrs. Ray.

"Perhaps the ring'll never be put on my finger in church," Minnie said a little confusedly.

"You don't mean to say that he and you'd demean yourselves by being married at a registry-office?" Mrs. Thurtle cried in horror; "we've always been church people, and I shouldn't be able to look folks in the face if my daughter went and got married, as if her husband was ashamed of her, at a registry-office. I should scarce look upon you as a wife, Minnie—don't you name such a thing again."

Not being prepared with a comforting answer to these doubts and fears of her mother's, Minnie took refuge in silence,

and a toss of the head. She was not a heartless daughter by any means, and it hurt and depressed her now to feel that her conduct would cause her mother sorrow when all the truth came to be known.

"And the truth shall be known as soon as ever Jack comes back from hunting to-day," she told herself resolutely. "I'm not going to have it said of me that I'm over-bold in going to a bachelor's house. Elsie'll be sorry enough she let her saucy tongue run on as it did to-day when the truth is known."

Her packing occupied her till late in the day, and still Jack did not come to the keeper's lodge to spend the evening as had been his wont of late. Minnie grew anxious, but not alarmed. She felt sure that old Mrs. Ray had managed to gain speech with her son, and that a climax was coming.

In truth this was the case. Jack had fallen in with his brother and sister-in-law as they jogged home, and Effie with unusual suavity and cordiality had invited him back to Moor Royal to dinner. He hesitated for a moment or two, and then said:

"I shall be delighted, Effie, if you'll have me in this gear."

"We always dress for dinner, and men who dine with me think it worth their while to do so; but you can please yourself," she said coldly, and Jack felt humbled and reproved, but not at all offended.

"By Jove! I like a woman who knows what's due to her, and will have it," the young fellow thought half-admiringly, half-regretfully, for it came upon him like a blow that Minnie Thurtle would never be able to recall a man to a sense of what was due to her in such a way as this.

"All right, Effie, I'll stop at my own house, and dress, and follow you very soon," he said aloud good-temperedly, and then he rode home, to hear from Elsie, his domestic, a distorted account of what had happened in the morning.

"Oh, Mr. Jack, is it you?" Elsie cried with a little shriek of affected alarm as her master came stamping into the passage, shouting for hot water. "Lor', I'm all of a tremble like. Missus—your ma, least-ways, came in this morning, and here was Miss Minnie Thurtle a-ragin' and going on at me as if I was a convicted thief, and your ma hearing her, and I not able to say a word for fright."

"Go to the deuce, and get me some hot water!" Jack shouted, flying beyond ear-shot of the obnoxious communication.

"The whole business will explode to-night if mother's been down here and has seen Minnie," he said to himself thoughtfully as he dressed. "Well, I'm almost glad of it. Sooner or later it must be known, and I sha'n't feel like a sneak any longer when it is."

Still, though he said this, he felt very much inclined to send an excuse, and stay away from Moor Royal, when he pictured the sorrow that would shade his mother's eyes when she looked at him and knew the truth.

"I have been a fool," he said passionately; "but I will be the only sufferer by my folly. Poor Minnie shall never feel it, even if she does cost me the love of my mother and sister."

Jenifer was standing in the hall when he went in, and he knew by the way in which she came forward and linked her arm within his, and drew him into the library, that the climax was rapidly approaching.

"Dinner's always a little late on hunting days; Effie won't be down yet, so we'll go in here and have a word or two before dinner. Jack, whatever comes, you'll always be my brother, and I shall always love you; you feel that, don't you?"

He bowed his head assentingly, and something like a sob convulsed his breast; but he said nothing, and Jenifer went on:

"Mother went to your house to-day, Jack, and now she knows what I have been afraid of for a long time. Dear Jack, can you make us happy still—with honour?"

"No, I can't, Jenny darling," he blurted out, leaning his head down on his sister's shoulder. "Oh, Jenny, don't break me down completely, till I've been man enough to tell you all the truth. It's too late, dear, for anything to be said or done. I married Minnie in Exeter yesterday, and, I suppose, mother and you'll cut me?"

For answer she laid her hand on his, and led him to his mother's room.

"I knew you would come, my boy; I knew, I knew," the widow said, trying her hardest and bravest to speak calmly and brightly; "and I know you will listen to your mother, and give up this terrible folly that will poison the happiness of us all if you carry it—"

"Wait, mother dear," Jenifer's voice interrupted; "Jack has come to tell you everything, and you will hear it patiently, won't you?"

She looked from her son to her daughter in bewilderment.

"He has come to confess his folly, and to listen to his mother, and take his mother's advice, backed by her tears and prayers," she cried, casting her arms about him, and then, with almost a groan, Jack said:

"Mother, forgive me! I married Minnie yesterday."

He was so excited and agitated as he spoke that he was scarcely conscious that his mother recoiled from him, and cried out in the bitterness of her grief and anger that she "would rather have seen him in his coffin than have heard this."

But Jenifer saw and heard it all, and knew how little it was meant in reality, and was gratefully glad that Jack's mind was too preoccupied to take in the full force of it.

"Dear Jack," she whispered soothingly, "go to the drawing-room now. Leave mother, like a good boy, and you shall see her again presently. Go to Hubert and Effie; have no concealment from them."

As she spoke, the last dinner-bell rang, and Jack went out to meet Hubert and his wife with his heavy secret unknown.

There was no opportunity of telling them, for dinner was served, and they were under the vigilant eyes of the servants. Presently Jenifer came in and took her place opposite to Jack with an apology for her mother's absence from the dinner-table.

"What's the matter with your mother, Hubert?" Mrs. Ray asked pettishly. "If people are ill in my house, I wish they'd say so, and not send down mysterious messages that leave me in the dark as to the real reason why they absent themselves from my dinner-table."

"My mother's at liberty to do as she pleases in her own home," Hubert said in reluctant reproof.

"Scarcely, I think, when her 'home' happens to be in another person's house," Mrs. Ray said coolly.

Then she made things easier for everybody by sending away dish after dish untasted, until Hubert felt almost annoyed with his mother for indulging "in a caprice" which robbed Effie of her appetite.

Jack had been nerving himself for the manly performance of a task that was odious to him during the whole of dinner, and as soon as they were left alone he began cracking filberts industriously, and prepared himself for action.

"Effie," he began rather hoarsely and with his fair boy's face looking strangely white and pain-lined, "you are vexed

with mother for not dining with us to-night, but you should rather be vexed with me."

She turned her face quickly towards him, and the bright smile that flashed out from her big blue eyes and small gleaming teeth encouraged him.

"I have told my mother to-night something that has distressed her dreadfully—something that perhaps she will never forgive me for," he said with a gulp. "I owe it to Hubert and you to tell you also; but I think you'll stand by us and not cast us off. I married Minnie Thurtle in Exeter yesterday, and—as you treat me, so must you treat my wife."

"I distinctly decline to associate with a gamekeeper's daughter on terms of equality," Effie said, rising up with all her ordinary graceful self-possession. "As for you, Jack, I'll treat you still as a bachelor brother if you like to come here sometimes, but I think your wife and I can have so little in common, that it would be absurd for me to attempt to notice her."

Then she made them a pretty sweeping bow and retired to one of her own fastnesses to write a highly-coloured and amusing account of the scene to her sister Flora.

"So Jack's disposed of," she thought complacently as she sealed her letter. "Young idiot! he actually thought that I was going to take up his precious wife because I fooled him to the top of his bent about her. I wish Edgcomb would take the plunge, then I should be rid of the lot of them. I do wonder that old Mrs. Ray is mean-spirited enough to stay on here when she must see that I want her to go."

"Won't you go and say a word to mother, Effie? She's feeling this about Jack awfully," her husband said, coming in to her presently.

She shrugged her pretty, slender shoulders and told him "No; family bothers were things she did not mean to take to herself."

BENVENUTO CELLINI.

IN TWO PARTS. PART I.

THE life of this wonderful, but wayward, genius, is amusing and interesting in the highest degree; indeed, his autobiography, with its curious mixture of fact and fiction, is, as Walpole observed, "more amusing than any novel."

The time in which he lived was a curiously brilliant period of Italy's history,

and the worship which rank then paid to genius gained him the intimacy of two Popes, Clement the Seventh, and Paul the Third; the Dukes Alessandro and Cosmo de' Medici, Francis the First, and Charles the Fifth—besides cardinals innumerable—and all the great Italian sculptors and painters of his day, including Michel Angelo and Titian.

"He touched nothing which he did not adorn," might well be said of him, and nothing was done by him that was not only an art gem in conception, but in workmanship as well. Luckily for us, his works have always been so highly prized, that they have been well cared for and tended, and, consequently, most of them have survived until our day. English gold has been able to procure for this country examples of his work that, once obtained, are literally priceless, and, being both in royal and good private collections, they are not likely again to leave these shores.

As there is no other lengthened biography of him than that which he wrote himself, or rather which he dictated to the young son of Michel di Goro della Pieve a Groppino, whilst he went on with his work, we are constrained to follow it, believing it to be true in all its main facts, although there can be no doubt he was led astray, occasionally, by his fervid imagination, his egregious vanity, and his love of the marvellous.

His vanity, however, was his weakest point, and his truthfulness in many cases had to yield to it. Knowing to the full his capabilities and powers, he endeavoured to believe that he could excel in everything, until his imagination became diseased, and he had recourse to what, in plain English, we should call downright lying.

He was the son of Giovanni Cellini and Maria Lisabetta Granacci, who were both natives of Florence, where he was born in the year 1500; but he said his ancestors had great possessions in the valley of Ambras, where they lived until one of the family named Cristofano quarrelled with some of their neighbours. The two disputants were compelled to separate; one was sent to Sienna, and Cristofano, who was Benvenuto's great-grandfather, was banished to Florence, where he settled.

Benvenuto owed his name to his father's dread of having another daughter, and when he heard a boy was born, he looked up to heaven and said, "Lord, I thank thee from the bottom of my heart for this present, which is very dear and welcome."

And when pressed to give the child a name, all he would answer was that he was benvenuto (welcome); so Benvenuto he was christened.

Whether he forgot the incidents of his childhood or not, or simply wanted to make out that in his early days he was marked as a prodigy, it is impossible to say, but he immediately commences his marvellous stories. First, he relates that he, when three years old, caught hold of a large scorpion, which did not harm him, although its bite or sting was deadly, and that he would not let it go, so that his father had, by gentle application of a pair of scissors, to decapitate it and cut off its sting. Next, when he was five years old, and looking at the fire, he was astonished to receive a box on the ear from his father, the cause of which the fond parent explained thus: "My dear child, I don't give you that box for any fault you have committed, but that you may recollect that the little creature which you see in the fire is a salamander; such a one as never was beheld before to my knowledge;" and then he embraced him and gave him money.

A child thus early favoured by the special sight of such a rarity as a salamander in the fire, must necessarily be reserved, in his after life, for some special fate. He probably inherited his artistic taste from his father, who, besides being an engineer and one of the court musicians, carved in ivory. He sadly wanted Benvenuto to give up his whole time to music, and set his heart upon his son becoming a proficient on the flute; but the boy, although musical, preferred drawing, and so it came to pass that he was bound apprentice to a goldsmith of Pinzi di Monte, called Michelagnolo, the father of the Cavaliere Baccio Bandinelli, who perhaps, as a sculptor, in his age approached Michel Angelo more nearly than any other, and who, in after life, became Cellini's pet aversion. But the boy was restless, and, leaving his master, engaged himself to another goldsmith, one Antonio di Sandro.

When he was sixteen, his brother, who then was but fourteen years of age, had a duel, and, in the squabble which afterwards ensued, Benvenuto got mixed up; the consequence being that the Council of Eight banished both of them for six months for a distance of ten miles from the city. Our hero went to Sienna, and there followed his trade with a goldsmith named Francesco Castoro. From thence he went to Bologna, where he stayed a time, and then returned to Florence.

There he abode a short time, until his brother returned in somewhat evil case, and having helped himself to some of Benvenuto's clothes without having first gone through the formality of asking his leave, Benvenuto got somewhat disgusted, left the parental roof, and went to Lucca, from thence to Pisa, but within a year he returned to Florence.

We narrowly escaped having him here in England—for Torregiano, who was employed by Henry the Eighth to make the magnificent tomb of his father, was then in Florence, seeking workmen to come to England. He saw some of Cellini's drawings and work, and warmly pressed him to go with him, but he refused, because Torregiano boasted of having broken Michel Angelo's nose with a blow of his fist. As Buonarrotti was Cellini's divinity, whom he devotedly worshipped, this was more than he could bear—and it is owing to this circumstance that England was deprived of the advantages of his talents.

He stayed at Florence until his nineteenth year, when he quite suddenly decamped, with a companion named Tasso, without even mentioning the matter to their parents, and went to Rome. Tasso soon returned to Florence, but Cellini found work, and stayed there for two years, when he, also, got home-sick, and returned to his father. But, he says, the goldsmiths at Florence were jealous of his good work, and he got into quarrels and brawls—indeed his temper was ever leading him into some scrape, one of which was so serious, that he had to fly Florence, and once more seek Rome, where he found Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, an old friend of his father's, had been elected Pope, under the title of Clement the Seventh (1523).

Here, the beauty of his workmanship soon procured him patrons among the aristocracy and the magnates of the Church, and he found that he could earn more money at making jewellery than at goldsmith's work pure and simple.

He soon came under the notice of the Pope, though not through his handicraft. He was asked by a friend, who was one of the Pope's household musicians, to play the flute at the Pope's Ferragosto (which was a Roman Festival, held on the 1st of August), and his performance so delighted his Holiness, that he enquired his name. Finding he was the son of his old Florentine acquaintance, Giovanni Cellini, he immediately appointed him one of his musicians,

and gave him a hundred gold crowns to divide with his new associates. Of course, he could not accept this good fortune like an ordinary mortal, so he had a vision of his father coming to him and bidding him take it under penalty of his curse; and, as if this tale required some sort of confirmation, he asserts that at the very same time, his father had a similar vision.

At this time he was making a silver vase for the Bishop of Salamanca, of very curious workmanship. It took a long time to make, so long, indeed, that the bishop's patience got exhausted, and, when he got it at last, he vowed that he would be as slow in paying for it as it had been long in manufacture. This angered Cellini, and led to a scene which is interesting, as illustrating the manners of the times. One day, in the bishop's absence, a Spanish gentleman was handling the vase, and by his clumsiness managed to injure it, so that it had to be returned to Cellini to be repaired. Once having got it into his possession, he was determined not to part with it. The bishop wanted it, however, to show somebody, and sent a servant who demanded it rudely. To this the answer was that the bishop should have it when he paid for it, and the man, after alternately supplicating and bullying, went away, swearing he would return with a body of Spaniards, and cut him in pieces.

Cellini got out his gun, and prepared for action; and hardly had he done so, when his house was attacked by a band of infuriated Spaniards, nor was it till some Roman gentlemen came to his assistance that the assailants retired. Cellini threatened to lay the whole affair before the Pope, but ultimately armed himself, and, with his servant carrying the disputed vase, he sought the bishop's presence, and, after some demur, he obtained payment.

When the Pope did hear of it, Cellini's conduct met with his warm approval, and commissions from cardinals and grandees flowed in upon him, especially for those medallions which it was then the fashion to wear in the hat. This induced him to study seal-engraving, at which he became a great adept, making many of the cardinals' seals. He also practised enamelling, which was of great use to him in his jewellery.

Then came a plague in Rome, and he amused himself by going into the country shooting. Of course, his skill exceeded everybody else's, if his own statements are

to be accepted as facts, killing pigeons, etc., invariably with a single bullet.

He next turned his attention to damascening on steel and silver, and some of his steel rings inlaid with gold fetched over forty crowns, which was less than half of what a brother artist, Caradosso, obtained for his work.

This was all very well in the piping times of peace, but war was at hand, and all the potentates of Italy got mixed up in the quarrel between Francis the First and Charles the Fifth. Cellini took up arms in defence of Rome, and, according to his own account, performed prodigies of valour. On the night of May 5th, 1527, Charles de Bourbon suddenly arrived before Rome with an army of forty thousand men, and next morning assaulted the city, where he was killed, early in the day, by a musket shot, whilst he was leading on his troops, scaling-ladder in hand. Of course, our hero claimed to have shot him, nor only so, but when Clement betook himself to the castle of St. Angelo for safety, Cellini had command of a portion of the ordnance, where, to the Pope's admiration, he killed large numbers of the enemy, and said he wounded the Prince of Orange.

One sample of his own version of his deeds of prowess may be given :

"I saw a man who was employed in getting the trenches repaired, and who stood with a spear in his hand, dressed in rose colour, and I began to deliberate how I could lay him flat. I took my swivel, which was almost equal to a demi-culverin, turned it round, and charging it with a good quantity of fine and coarse powder mixed, aimed at him exactly. Though he was at so great a distance, that it could not be expected any effort of art should make such pieces carry so far, I fired off the gun, and hit the man in red exactly in the middle. He had arrogantly placed his sword before him in a sort of Spanish bravado, but the ball of my piece hit against his sword, and the man was seen severed in two pieces. The Pope, who did not dream of any such thing, was highly delighted and surprised at what he saw, as well because he thought it impossible that such a piece could carry so far, as that he could not conceive how the man could be cut into two pieces."

Things grew desperate, and, before the capitulation on June 5th, 1527, Clement employed Cellini to take all the jewels of the regalia from their settings, and melt down the gold, which weighed about a

hundred pounds. The jewels, for safety, were sewn into the skirts of the dresses both of the Pontiff and his master of the horse.

After the capitulation, Cellini returned to Florence, where he found his father well ; and, having administered to his necessities, he went to Mantua, where he visited Giulio Romano, who recommended him to the duke, from whom he speedily had commissions. He did not stop long there, however, but returned to Florence, where he found all his family, with the exception of a brother and sister, dead of the plague—that dreadful scourge which from May to November, 1527, killed forty thousand persons in Florence.

Here he stayed some little time, and was visited by Michel Angelo ; but at last the Pope, hearing he was at Florence, begged him to come to Rome, and offered him very advantageous terms. But he coquetted before he consented, and when he did go, he refrained for some time from visiting the Pope.

At last they met, and Clement gave him a commission, which turned out one of his masterpieces, to make him a morse, or clasp, for his pontifical cape.

He afterwards designed and struck some medals and coins, and was appointed stamp-master to the mint, with a liberal salary.

And now follows an episode which shows the general lawlessness of those days. Brawling, street-fighting, and assassination were of everyday occurrence, and swords leaped lightly from their scabbards on slender pretence, when worn by these impulsive Italians.

His brother—who was in Rome, in the service of Alessandro de' Medici—of course got quarrelsome, a fight occurred, and he was shot in the leg. Benvenuto immediately joined in the *melée*, and would have killed the musqueteer who shot his brother, had not the man escaped. The surgeons proposed cutting off the brother's leg—but their patient would not hear of it, and consequently died. Benvenuto sorrowed deeply for him, and brooded over revenge, until he found out the habitation of the unfortunate musqueteer. Him he found standing at his door, and, without more ado, he smote and felled him with a blow from a long dagger ; and, when the poor wretch could not help himself, he stabbed him in the collar-bone and neck with such force that he could not extract the dagger. Having thus assassinated his enemy, he left the dagger in the corpse, and immediately sought Duke Alessandro,

who at once accorded him his protection, and told him to go on with the work he had in hand for his holiness. And all the notice ever taken of this outrage, was that at their next interview, the Pope slightly frowned on Cellini, and said significantly to him: "Now that you have recovered your health, Benvenuto, take care of yourself."

He was now in high favour, kept five journeymen, and was entrusted by the Pope with all his jewels for resetting—but these he narrowly escaped losing, owing to a burglary at his house, which was partially defeated through the sagacity of his dog, who afterwards met the thief in the street, flew at him, and would not be beaten off. There was nothing left for the thief to do but to confess, and this he did, making full restitution of the stolen property; so that Cellini and his dog were satisfied—there always is a halo of romance about everything connected with this wonderful man.

The Pope was highly delighted with his mose, and made Cellini one of his mace-bearers, who preceded the pontiff carrying rods. He also gave him an order to make a chalice, and the design was worthy of the master. Instead of an ordinary stem the cup was upheld by three figures of Faith, Hope, and Charity, and on the foot were three bosses, on which were represented, in basso-relievo, three stories relating to the figures. And it was over this chalice that he and his friend and protector, the Pope, quarrelled.

No sooner was the design shown to his holiness, and duly admired, than Benvenuto must needs ask for more preferment; this time a place worth over eight hundred crowns yearly. The Pope refused, saying, if he enriched the artist, he would no longer care to work; but at last consented to give him the next good piece of preferment that fell vacant, provided he made haste and finished the chalice. The Pope went to Bologna, and Cellini says he made great progress with his work, but could not get on for want of more gold, which he could not obtain from the papal treasury. Besides which, he says he suffered from bad eyes, so much so that he thought he should lose his sight.

On his return, the Pope sent for him, and was so displeased with him for the little progress that he had made in his work, that he fell in a violent passion, and said:

"As there is truth in God, I assure you, since you value no living soul, that, if

a regard for decency did not prevent me, I would order both you and your work to be thrown this moment out of the window."

Cellini still pleaded his blindness, and in a few days the Pope sent for him, and spoke kindly to him.

But intrigues were going on against him. Through the influence of Cardinal Salviati—who was no friend to Benvenuto—a rival goldsmith, named Tobbia, was introduced to Clement, and in a competition between Cellini and Tobbia, for the mounting of a unicorn's—or narwhal's—horn, which was to be sent as a present to Francis the First, Tobbia gained the day. Then he irritated the Pope by asking for more money for gold for the chalice, which never seemed nearer completion, and then he was dismissed from his situation in the mint. At last the Pope lost all patience, and sent for the chalice, finished or unfinished. Cellini refused to yield it. His argument was, that the Pope had advanced him five hundred crowns, which he would return, but that he had no right whatever to the unfinished cup. Nor could anything stir him from his resolution.

He was taken before the governor of Rome; but neither threats nor cajolings prevailed, and the matter ended in his having his own way, returning the money, and keeping the unfinished chalice. It must, however, have been some comfort to him to find that the pontiff did not appreciate his rival's work.

Presumably, Cellini considered this portion of his life as tame, so he launches out in a cock and bull story of his studying necromancy in company with a Sicilian priest. They employed a boy as a medium, and there were the usual clouds of incense-burning, perfumes, etc., until the medium declared they were surrounded by a million fierce men, besides four armed giants. This even daunted our hero; but at last, although at one time the place was full of devils, they gradually disappeared, until only a few were left, who accompanied them on their way home, playfully leaping and skipping, sometimes running on the roofs of the houses, and sometimes on the ground. This seems to have been his worst encounter with spirits, and he settled down once more to his trade, until his bad temper again got him into trouble.

This time he quarrelled with a Signor Benedetto, who provoked him beyond endurance by telling him that he and his partner Felice were both scoundrels. Cellini's hot blood fired up at this,

and, scooping up a handful of mud out of the street, he threw it at Benedetto. Unfortunately, there was a sharp flint with the dirt, which stunned him, and so cut his head that it bled profusely. Some meddler told the Pope that Benvenuto had just murdered his rival Tobbia, and the Pope, in a passion, ordered the governor of Rome to seize Cellini, and hang him at once. Luckily for him he got instant information, and lost no time in flying from Rome as fast as a horse could gallop, leaving the irate pontiff to find out almost immediately afterwards that Tobbia was alive and well.

He fled to Naples, where the viceroy would fain have kept him, but Cardinal de' Medici having written to him to return to Rome without delay, he did so, and immediately set about a medal for the Pope, commemorating the universal peace between 1530 and 1536. He continued to enjoy Clement's favour until his death in 1534, at which time he had a quarrel with, and killed, a man named Pompeo, so had to seek the protection of some powerful friend, whom he found in Cardinal Cornaro; and the new Pope, Paul the Third—Cardinal Alessandro Farnese—gave him not only a safe conduct, but at once employed him in the mint. But, having aroused the enmity of Signor Pier Luigi Farnese, who hired a disbanded soldier to assassinate him, he thought it time to move, and went to Florence.

Duke Alessandro de' Medici received him very kindly, and would have had him stay, but he went with two friends of his—sculptors—to Venice, where they stopped a short time, and then returned to Florence, where he employed himself at the mint and in making jewellery, until a safe conduct arrived for him from the Pope, with his commands that he should immediately repair to Rome.

On his arrival, the magistrates, who were not aware of his protection, sent some of the city guards to arrest him for the murder of Pompeo, but they retired upon seeing the document, and Cellini had his pardon properly registered. After this he had a violent illness, and nearly died; and he attributes his recovery to drinking plentifully of cold water whilst in a violent fever. But even his convalescence must be attended with some extraordinary occurrence, for he vomited a hairy worm, about a quarter of a cubit long; the hairs were very long, and the worm was shockingly ugly, having spots of different colours,

green, black, and red; in fact, quite an artistic worm, worthy of having emanated from such a genius.

He required his native air of Florence to restore him to health, but found the duke much prejudiced against him, owing to malicious reports; so, after a short stay, he returned to Rome, and very soon after, Alessandro was assassinated by Lorenzo de' Medici, 6th January, 1537, and Cosmo reigned in his stead.

At this time Charles the Fifth paid a visit to Rome, and the Pope thought to make him some extraordinary present. Cellini suggested a gold crucifix in which he could utilise the statuettes and ornaments of his beloved chalice, but Paul decided to give a superbly illuminated missal, and Cellini was to make the cover, which was to be of gold, adorned with jewels worth about six thousand crowns, and he was also deputed to be the bearer of the present to the emperor, who reciprocated the Pope's gift by a diamond which had cost him twelve thousand crowns, which Cellini afterwards set as a ring for Pope Paul. But he complained that he was not paid commensurately for his labour, either in the ring or the book-cover, so he determined to go to France, and finally accomplished the journey, wonderful to relate, without any marvellous adventures, but only the ordinary incidents of travel.

He arrived in Paris, saw, and was graciously received by Francis the First, started with him on his journey to Lyons, where it was arranged that Cellini should stay, and then, unstable as water, because he was taken ill, and his attendant, Ascanio, had the ague, he was disgusted with France, and determined to return to Rome, which he reached in safety, and continued his business peacefully, having eight assistants.

One of these, however, treacherously and falsely told the secretary of his old enemy, Pier Luigi, that Benvenuto was worth at least eighty thousand ducats, the greatest portion of which belonged to the Church, and which he had stolen when in the Castle of St. Angelo during the siege of Rome.

This was a bait too great for the avarice of the Pope, so one fine morning poor Cellini found himself in custody of the city guard, and safely lodged in the Castle of St. Angelo, he being at this time but thirty-seven years of age. After a delay of some days he was examined, and made a good defence, but to no purpose. Pier Luigi had asked his father for Cellini's money, and the Pope had granted his

prayer; and even the remonstrances of King Francis the First were useless—for he was told that Benvenuto was a turbulent, troublesome fellow, and his majesty was advised not to interfere, because he was kept in prison for committing murder and other crimes. The king even begged for his release on the grounds that as he had visited France with the Pope's permission, and with the intention of remaining, he was virtually his subject; but even this reasoning could not prevail, and Cellini must remain in durance.

The constable of St. Angelo was a Florentine, and greatly tempered the severity of Cellini's incarceration by allowing him to walk freely about the castle on parole. But it seems that the constable was subject to annual fits of monomania. One year he fancied himself a pitcher of oil; another year, a frog, and would leap about as such; and this year he was a bat, and, believing in his own powers of volition, he fancied that Cellini's ingenuity might also enable him to fly, and thus escape.

So his parole was taken from him, and he was shut up. This naturally made Benvenuto anxious to escape, and, having torn up his sheets, and made lengths of rope therewith, he managed to steal a pair of pincers. With these latter, he drew the nails which fastened the iron plates to the door, making false heads with wax and iron rust.

Matters being thus prepared, he made his attempt one night, and succeeded in getting outside, but at the cost of a broken leg. In his helpless condition some mastiffs set upon him, and he had a desperate fight with them. A water-carrier gave him a lift, and got him farther away, and then he crawled and dragged himself on hands and knees, trying to reach the house of the Duchess Ottavio, who had formerly been the wife of the murdered Alessandro de' Medici. However, luckily, a servant of Cardinal Cornaro saw him in this plight, and immediately told his master, who at once had him fetched in and his injuries seen to.

The cardinal next went to the Pope to intercede for his protégé, and at first Paul seemed inclined to pardon, for he himself had once broken out of St. Angelo, where he had been imprisoned for forging a papal brief. But Cellini's evil genius, Pier Luigi, was present; his counsels had too much weight, and the unfortunate artist was taken, nominally as a guest of the pontiff, to the papal palace, and after a

little time he was conveyed again to the Castle of St. Angelo.

Here the crazy governor, in order to keep him safely, confined him in a very dark room under the garden, the floor of which was covered with water, and which was, besides, tenanted by tarantulas and other noxious insects.

Deprived of all society, and with no books save a Bible and the *Chronicles of Villani*, Cellini's reason seems to have partially given way, and he records numerous visions seen, which, it is needless to say, were of the most astounding nature. Indeed the Pope believed him mad, and sent word to the governor of St. Angelo to take no further heed of him, but to mind the salvation of his own soul—for though the governor had recovered his reason, his health was undermined.

With returning sense, he treated his prisoner better, giving him pens, ink, and paper, besides modelling wax and implements, so that his lot was much ameliorated; nay, just before his death, he allowed Cellini almost the same liberty he had enjoyed when first he was imprisoned—a privilege which was confirmed by his successor, Antonio Ugolini.

About this time, Cellini says, an attempt was made to poison him by mixing pounded diamonds with his food, but this was defeated by the avarice of the person employed to make the powder, who kept the real stone and pounded a counterfeit. After this the governor sent him food from his own table, and one of his servants tasted it.

Brighter days were now in store for our hero, for the Cardinal of Ferrara, coming to Rome from the court of France, finding the Pope one day in a good humour, asked, as a boon, in the name of the king his master, the liberation of Cellini, which was graciously accorded, and he was at once released before the news could come to the ears of his enemy, Pier Luigi.

MRS. BEAUMONT'S LOVE STORY.

SHE had said it, and had meant it too—at the time. And now he was gone, perhaps for good. She stood, one slender arm leant upon the mantelpiece, gazing downward into the flames, thinking of the effect of her words. How hateful she must have seemed in his eyes—those honest eyes of his—when she wilfully put aside his earnest remonstrances, and would hear

nothing. There was resentment still in her quivering lip and flushed cheek, but her heart sank as she thought of what awaited her if he would not speak.

"Very well," he had said, clearly and calmly, pride being roused at last; "if you will not listen, Florrie, there is nothing left for me but to go." What business had he to be calm at such a moment? Men always took these things more easily than women, their conceit enabling them to appear masters of the situation even when they ought to look worsted. She remembered he had turned as he reached the door, and added half-tenderly: "Will you?" And her pride had not permitted her to soften then, or look up.

The worst was—was it the worst? she tried to think—that she was going to a ball that night where he would be. Suppose he sulked and would not speak. Would people notice it? At all events she could not speak first. Tom Carrington would have to seek her out for himself, if he wanted her. She would behave exactly as if he was not there until he had made amends. No more dances kept with an initial made by herself—it was cruel to think of it. She would keep two, just in case. Then she resolved to banish him utterly from her thoughts for the present, and leave the unravelling of the knot till the evening. Meanwhile considerations of dress claimed her. So she hurried away out of the pretty, sunlit drawing-room, and was invisible till lunch-time.

In the afternoon there was positively nothing more to be done. The sky had clouded over, and the London streets and squares looked miserable in the dripping rain. It was lucky rain did not stop people going to balls, Florrie Belton thought. Time seemed to lag dreadfully. Perhaps it was the long wet afternoon, for she was not ordinarily eager or excitable about balls and festivities, getting enough of them to take them as they came. But somehow she could not help feeling that this might be a crisis. While her aunt dozed comfortably until the advent of afternoon-tea should call for semi-wakefulness, she went over the scene of the morning in her mind. She decided she had said nothing that she had not meant; nothing that was not perfectly just and true—at least it looked like being true, if nobody took the trouble to explain it. And he never did explain anything properly. He always said "Very well," in a provoking sort of way, eyebrows and shoulders

going up together, as if he were the most hardly-used man in creation. Even when she was right and he was wrong, there was no good in going on with it after that. There is positively no satisfaction in being right, when everyone else gives you dispassionately to understand that they think you wrong.

How dismal London looks in a shower! If someone only would call. The very dogs outside wandered up and down in a melancholy way, peering aimlessly into doorways and down areas. Hush, that was a knock! A visitor's knock, calculated to shake people into amiably expectant attitudes, followed by a genteel ring—a curfew for the suppression of shabby novels, old slippers, and other "uncompany" things.

It may be remarked of Miss Belton, senior, that she was never surprised. She had only to open her eyes on occasions like the present, and there she was, equal to anything, from a telegram to a peeress. Mr. Henry Beaumont, who smiled his easy way into the room, was a visitor to whom Miss Belton was ever ready to do infinite honour. He was one of that numerous body of well-dressed, well-fed, gentlemanly do-nothings, whose lives are one consistent effort to please themselves. At thirty-five, and what is called a ladies' man, he was for ever to be met with dawdling in the wake of some attractive woman or another. Not because he was susceptible, but because, being a man of taste, he liked to be seen and heard of in the society of what he called "presentable women." Presentable women, for their part, were glad to see him; for was he not good-looking, of good figure, very well off, and not the least bit in the world bald?

Miss Belton, who was about the most entertaining old maid in London when she thought fit, roused herself to her utmost conversational pressure whenever she saw Henry Beaumont. Florrie saw it, and usually contrived to qualify her aunt's attentions by remarks of a casual and practical nature. She diverted herself by dissecting Mr. Beaumont's agreeable commonplaces, and shaking him into something like reality. After fifteen years of saying what we do not mean, it is sometimes refreshing to be called upon to say what we do; and Beaumont liked it. He felt it did him good. It was something to have come across a girl who cared not one jot for what he said, and who persistently threw cold water upon her aunt's civilities, when those civilities seemed to bear any-

thing like a reference to herself. To-day he waded patiently through the elder lady's flow of general conversation, and having elicited the fact that they were going to the B——'s ball, calmly fished for an invitation to dine and escort them, and got it.

So dinner was not the dreary probation Florrie had reckoned upon its being. Beaumont was agreeable and facetious; and when he had gone off to his chambers to dress, she was in a more hopeful mood. After all, there were people in the world who had no wish to snub her.

Why should she be snubbed by one man, when there were plenty of others richer, more agreeable, more amusing, and perhaps handsomer, who were ready to take her word for law, and defer to her on all occasions? And what were those others to her? She asked herself with reactionary inconsistency. Nothing, absolutely nothing. Their attentions bored, when they did not amuse her. She saw them for what they were: men who tried to pique her vanity and gratify their own; men who amused themselves with her as with a pretty child; men who never spoke to her on any subject which could be worth a moment's serious consideration; men who had never thought it worth their masculine while to see whether a woman could grapple with the graver questions of life, or pronounce an opinion on anything outside the lazy, artificial world of fashion and its ignoble pleasures.

When they alighted under the broad awning at the B——'s, people were arriving fast. The big staircase was blocked with arrivals who could neither get up nor down. It was one of those crushes where the hostess parades her entire acquaintance regardless of their comfort. Girls with their wraps still about them were waiting in the draughty hall, tapping their feet to the distant melodies of the Hungarians which occasionally floated down from above. The two ladies followed Beaumont into the tea-room, where they sat down to wait for the subsidence of the crowd. He was very deferential to-night—almost tender, Florrie thought; and looked very well. She could not but call to mind one or two of her friends who would have prized his attention. There was no sign of the man she sought in the tea-room, however; only a few stragglers who had failed in their attempts on the staircase, and had sat down like sensible people to wait patiently. As they passed in, Florrie caught sight of her face in the glass, and

was startled to see a drawn, anxious look upon it. Why should she be anxious about anything with Beaumont's flow of racy witty talk in her ears? But she could not attend. Luckily he did not seem to notice her absence of mind, but went on with his cool criticism of the heated struggling mass, which was visible on the staircase outside. It is much to believe in oneself in this world. Henry Beaumont certainly knew from long experience that he could be entertaining; but he overvalued himself to-night. Man of the world though he was, he did not see it, but calmly and confidently reckoned his chances of success with this girl, who, he had lately acknowledged to himself, was a presentable woman who was likely to make a very presentable wife.

A sudden unaccountable clearance on the stairs came as a relief to Florrie. Once in the dancing-room she looked round quickly for the familiar face among the knot of her acquaintances who pressed forward. She began to think it was not there, till, near the end of her first valse with Beaumont, she caught sight of it through a doorway. A contented face enough ordinarily, it had a shade upon it now which the half light of the landing did not reveal. A showy-looking girl with dark eyes and fair hair was looking up into his face. Florrie thought he looked rather bored, and tried to catch his eye, as she and her partner whirled near them. But it was not to be caught. It wandered provokingly over every conceivable object in her neighbourhood, carefully inspected remote corners and particular persons in the crowd of dancers, but never came in her direction. She longed for the power of the evil eye, of which people were conscious even in the backs of their heads. Whenever she got near, some remark of that flippant-looking girl seemed to call for special attention. Could he be avoiding her? She did not think so; he was evidently looking out for someone. She could read his face well enough to know that. Next time they came round, he was gone, and a portly old gentleman in a capacious white waistcoat stood by the dark-eyed one's side.

Fate, who is often very persistent in denying us what we most especially want, has a trick of throwing it into our laps at the last moment, when we least expect it. At the end of the valse, no sooner was Florrie comfortably settled in a sort of greenhouse recess with Beaumont, than Tom appeared in the opening, conveying a dowager. At first it was evident he did

not recognise them, for they were in semi-obscurity; and Florrie prayed that he might not look again. But he did, taking them both in with a glance that seemed to shrivel her up with its quiet scorn. For a moment she lost her presence of mind. Then she bowed, a little too late, for the benefit of his back, as he retired muttering something about the seats being occupied. Beaumont had looked up, seeing the unguarded play in his fair partner's face, and caught sight of the ill-assorted couple in full retreat. A smile played under his well-waxed moustache.

"There goes Carrington," said he, "boring himself with the old women as usual. Always his way when he can't get what he wants."

It was said in a tone of quiet irony and superiority that made Florrie's blood boil. Mentally she contrasted the two men. The assured suavity and gentlemanly drawl of the one before her; the quiet sense of power that wealth and social status had stamped upon his face and bearing—even his gestures. Above all the worldly, trivial, heartless, soulless talk, and the cruel gibing tone which, as a professed knower of men, he employed in connection with many things yet sacred in Florrie's eyes.

Then the other with his manly outspoken way. One could listen to what he said. It was reliable, if occasionally blunt. Not so experienced as Beaumont, he wanted in tact and temper on occasions. "Fads," savouring of a schoolboy's glorified notions, still clung about him; amongst them might be found an exacting conception of what a woman should be. Sincere and upright, retiring and sensitive in contact with those not quite to his taste, genial and completely at his ease only with a few—of whom Florrie knew she was one—such morally was Tom Carrington. By profession he was a subaltern in one of Her Majesty's foot regiments, and what is called poor.

But Miss Belton was not without some spirit. She would not have allowed her dearest friend to see her look downcast because a man misjudged her. When they got down to the refreshment-room, which was crowded with heated, thirsty couples, she took some champagne. It did her good; she felt she could and would enjoy herself now, come what might. And what was to prevent her? She had dances with all the best men there. A knot of them were waiting for her at the top of the stairs when the dancing recommenced. Amongst them

was Carrington, not waiting for her, certainly, for he had got possession of the dark-eyed one's card, and was coolly picking valses here and there upon it. It was an opportunity. Touching his arm lightly as she passed, Florrie asked him archly if he were not going to ask her to dance. It was spoken with perfect naturalness and grace. She had great control of feature; no covert pique; no—well, to a practised ear there might have been a shade of over-intensity in her tone, a sad appeal to his better nature, hidden far down in the depths of a necessarily conventional utterance. But Carrington's ear was not practised. He was a baby in the ways of the sex. He had thought her frivolous in the morning for picking a quarrel with him about what he considered nothing at all, and for refusing to listen to any explanation; and now he regarded this as a fresh piece of levity. She could go and sit with Beaumont in the conservatory, and then beckon him back like a child who has been put in the corner. It was very foolish and ridiculous, no doubt, but men, otherwise of great common-sense, are invariably very foolish and childish when jealousy is once aroused. So there was an awkward pause, which Carrington did not attempt to break, and Florrie, seeing the little effect she had made, swept away with her new partner into the ball-room, despair in her heart and utter indifference on her face. Perhaps, if she had not been so good an actress, she might have fared better; but what is a delicately-minded girl to do when a man, however much she may care for him, remains persistently deaf and blind?

It was very hot. When is a dance otherwise to those engaged in it? The neglected ones shivered in the keen draught that blew from the open windows, but lingered on, having, indeed, little alternative, and dependent for their very exit on remote supping chaperons, or fortuitous male escort, which offered not. Luckless beings! What do they here, who can neither dance well, talk much, still less look handsome and seem merry, which are qualifications in some degree indispensable to social success? Never was any place where we so selfishly seek our own ends and pleasure like the ball-room. Awkwardness and stupidity, elsewhere meeting with ordinary politeness and consideration, here find their true level. Beauty, wit, and assurance are all in all. What, indeed, have we to say to virtue if she squints, or dances some forgotten *deux-temps*, or fears

men like a nun? Pleasure, untrammelled by social duties, here reigns supreme; the beauty dances all the night and dreams of her successes; the poor wallflower returns home, her gloves uncreased, to wonder why women are ever ugly.

The ball, which, in spite of her success, had seemed almost interminable to Florrie, was now drawing to its close. Her aunt, having by this time exhausted even her large capabilities for loud, slow, elderly gossip in the lower regions, begged Beaumont to find her niece. He was nothing loth, and brought her down, looking flushed and pretty, to the hall, where a dawdling crowd of departures were laughing and talking noisily with that absence of constraint that sets in in the small hours. He arranged her wraps with an air of proprietorship which galled her, and did not escape her aunt's sharp vision. But she turned and thanked him with her frank smile, and at the same moment caught sight of Carrington standing very solemn and very upright at the door, his hat on his head and a cigarette in his mouth.

Such was the depth of self-abasement to which she had fallen, such was the humbling of her pride, that she would have given worlds to quit Beaumont's arm and go up to Carrington, even in the presence of everybody, and ask his forgiveness for her wilfulness of the morning. She would have humbled herself to him as to no other man, if only that sickening look of indifference could have been pleaded from his face. She knew he cared for her still, and was he to go from her sight without one word of explanation, all because maidenly modesty and pride forbade any overture on her part?

One long last look of love and reproach passed between these two, and she was out in the night air, among the carriages that thronged the entrance. As they drove off, she saw him come out and walk rapidly down the street.

Carrington, though he found it hard to forgive what he called her frivolousness, had intended that quarrel to be made up. Florrie had resolved it must. But the opportunity never came. The Beltons left London to pay visits, and absence inevitably widened the breach.

Florrie is Mrs. Beaumont now, and a fashionable woman. She quitted girl's estate when she married Henry Beaumont. Whether she has found him selfish, ostentatious, or cynical, we do not know. She makes full use of his wealth as her part of

the contract. Her face, like those of so many beautiful women in London, has a cold, indifferent look; but people envy her. She has a beautiful home, a little child with long fair hair like her mother's, and a husband who, whatever he may be, is proud of his presentable wife.

Very few people know anything about Mrs. Beaumont's love-affair.

ALONG THE SILVER STREAK.

PART II.

As we approached the yacht people were looking out at us from under the awning on board the yacht, among whom I fancied I recognised the slender graceful form of Hilda Chudleigh; while, on our side, Tom Courtney was making energetic signals of welcome and recognition. In a few moments Hilda and I would meet. I should be received, no doubt, as a mere acquaintance—an old friend who had been lost sight of for years, and whose reappearance would be the subject of a little commonplace surprise. Better to remain unknown than to be received like this. And then the thought occurred: "Why not remain unknown? Five years in India had turned me from a fair young Englishman into a copper-coloured individual of any possible nationality, from a Chinese to a Spaniard. And then I had changed my name as well as my complexion. My uncle, when he left the service of Her Majesty for the more profitable one of the Rajah of M——, whose daughter and successor he afterwards married, had assumed the more easily pronounced name of Lamallam, a name afterwards inscribed in pleasant characters on the golden records of the Three per Cents, and by which name, at the Begum's desire, I had passed while in India. And why should not I still retain it? This point I rapidly explained to young Courtney as we were rowed across the harbour.

"All right," he rejoined, when I had finished my little story. "As long as it is the name you go by, what does it matter? I shall leave it to Hilda to find you out. And now, my friend," to the boatman, as we touched the side of the Sea Mew, "how much?"

The boatman suggested five francs for this little passage—an extortionate race all over the world are the boatmen who hang about ports and ships—but eventually was well satisfied with one franc. And then, in a few moments we stood on the deck of the

yacht—a shaded lounge, very cool and pleasant after the glare of the harbour, with matting screens, and Japanese chairs and lounges, and books and newspapers everywhere strewing the decks.

We were received by a bright-faced, pleasant young fellow, who turned out to be Mr. Chancellor's private secretary—the ornamental secretary that is—the Hon. Wallace Wyvern, a link with the great world into which his chief was trying to gain an entrance. Hence Mr. Wyvern was entertaining Mr. Chancellor's friends on board his yacht, while his two fellow-secretaries were fathoms deep in Blue Books and margined foolscap at Whitehall.

"Delighted to see you, old chap," cried Mr. Wyvern, grasping Tommie warmly by the hand; "and your friend, too, is welcome. And now to present you to our chiefs in command."

And Wyvern tripped lightly before us along the deck, leading the way to a small group of young women, at the sight of whom my heart had begun to beat the rataplan. But, after all, the tall, graceful figure I had seen was not Hilda—she was not upon deck—but proved to be Miss Chancellor, a slight and pretty girl with something of a northern accent, which, with a little nervous awkwardness at times, gave her an individuality not at all unpleasant. Then there was a married aunt of the M.P.'s, the chaperon of the party, a certain Mrs. Bacon, stout and laughter-loving, and an aristocratic-looking Miss Wyvern, haughty but graceful.

"Your cousin Hilda is below," explained Miss Chancellor nervously to Tom Courtney, who had attached himself to her from the first, with an air of feeling himself perfectly happy in her society; "won't you like to go down and see her?"

"No, thank you," replied Tom; "I'll stop here if you'll let me. Hilda can come up if she wants to see me. And now tell me what we are to do and where to go?"

"Well," replied Miss Chancellor in hesitating tones, "I don't quite know. John"—her brother, no doubt—"has given us carte blanche to go where we like, but not more than twelve hours distant from England, for he may want to consult Mr. Wyvern at any moment; and then, you see, he is naturally anxious to join us as often as possible."

Here Mrs. Bacon interposed with her habitual happy laugh:

"Oh, that is quite natural. I remember when Charles and I—that is Mr. Bacon,

you know—were courting, and I was ordered by the doctors to the Spas——"

"Yes, you told us that story yesterday, aunt," interrupted Miss Chancellor hastily.

"But these gentlemen haven't heard it," persisted Mrs. Bacon.

I made a friend of Mrs. Bacon from that moment, by listening attentively and respectfully to her story. It was not a very old story after all, for Mrs. Bacon was still young and buxom, and might even now have drawn admirers to the Spas.

But just then I heard a voice, whose thrilling accents could never be mistaken. It was Hilda, who, speaking from the companion-ladder, was calling in sweet but commanding tones:

"Mr. Wyvern, Mr. Wyvern, have the letters come on board?"

"Just this moment come!" cried Mr. Wyvern, handing Hilda a packet of despatches which she looked hastily over, and then, with a disappointed face, retired once more.

"I don't know what news she'd have," cried Mrs. Bacon; "there couldn't be a more devoted lover than John. He sends her a telegram every four hours. And there's sure to be one to rouse us all up in the middle of the night! The last time," pursued Mrs. Bacon with evident pride in the narration, "a Government despatch-boat steamed after us fifty miles with John's message, and was pretty nearly lost with all hands in the fog."

And yet, in spite of all this devotion, it was evident from the aspect of Hilda's face as she reappeared once more, that she was scarcely made happy by it. But, at this present moment, the chief object of her solicitude is her father; tall and rather stooping, with his rosy, well-preserved west-country face and aquiline and clearly-cut features. The steps and the encumberment of the decks puzzle him a little, and he leans heavily on his daughter's arm till he has taken his seat on deck, when he looks benevolently round as he takes his glasses and begins to scrutinise the place and its surroundings.

"Rather different sight," he began, after taking a long look at the forts that shut us in, at the huge rock towering above us, and the sparsely scattered craft about the harbour. "Rather different from Cherbourg in 1858, when I assisted, as the French would say, at the meeting between their Emperor and our Queen, at the inauguration of the new fortifications. I brought my yacht over, and upon my word

I thought we should have been blown out of the water, with the saluting and firing of big guns. Ah, the French are a fickle people, Mrs. Bacon!"

And poor Mrs. Bacon, thus singled out—she evidently rather dreaded the old gentleman and preferred to keep out of the radius of his observations—could only say that she had always heard that the French were a fickle people.

By this time the squire's faded brown eyes had passed over me without any sign of recognition, and then my face came under Hilda's more trying scrutiny. And next moment she called Tom Courtney to her side.

"Yes, Lamallam," I heard Tom say. "French? He may be originally, or Dutch or Hebrew; but a goodish sort of fellow anyhow. Shall I bring him to you?"

Miss Chudleigh made a hasty sign of dissent, and at that moment Mr. Wyvern burst in upon the group on deck with a programme fully arranged.

"We've got to go up the mountain to Fort du Roule, first of all. That's what everybody does, and as it's the only thing to do at Cherbourg, we must make the most of it. There are voitures for those who don't like to walk."

Mrs. Bacon and the squire were the only ones who did not care for walking, and they were packed comfortably in a voiture, which drove off wildly, the coachman making his whip explode like a cracker. But we soon overtook it crawling along at the rate of a mile or so an hour.

"Napoleon couldn't manage it," sang out the chatty old squire from his voiture. "He couldn't walk up, so he had this road made to drive up to the top—cost I don't know how many millions of francs. Ah, he was a great man that. Ave Caesar Imperator!" cried the squire, doffing his hat.

The coachman looked round and grinned, recognising the Latin perhaps.

"Vive la République!" he cried, and urged his horses to a momentary gallop.

But the path is best for us pedestrians—the winding path, faced here and there with stone, where the goats browse by the side on the banks fresh with ferns and wild flowers. As we rise we unfold the panorama of the town and port, with the green valleys, whose little streams furnish the harbour with a sort of excuse for existence; the sea in its restless tranquillity spreading far and wide in streaks of purple and green, with a white sail

here and there, and white clouds resting above in the pure blue sky.

"But, according to Shakespeare," begins Miss Wyvern, whose voice has hardly before been heard; "according to Shakespeare, the murmuring surges should cease to be heard at such a height as this; while in reality we hear them much more plainly than below. Now, how is this?"

Miss Chancellor was far too much out of breath to attempt a reply, while Hilda had thrown herself on the grassy bank, her eyes fixed wistfully on the distant sea-line. Tommie came bravely to the rescue.

"Why, clearly Shakespeare was wrong," he cried; "he often wrote very carelessly. The thing ought to be put right in the next edition, with a note 'Amended by Miss Wyvern.'"

But Miss Wyvern descended upon Tommie with all the force of a Nasmyth steam-hammer.

"Foolish youth," she said compassionately, "to pit your feeble intellect against the genius of Shakespeare. The description you cavil at—"

"No, upon my word," interposed Tommie. "You were cavilling at it, not I."

"The description you cavilled at," resumed Miss Wyvern, not sparing him in the least, "was given to a blind man to make him think he stood on a lofty height while all the time he was on level ground. The illusion may have been complete; but the blind man would naturally listen eagerly for the whisper of the sea below, in which he hoped to end his sorrows. His guide, noticing this ~~rapt~~ attention, explains the reason that no sound reaches the listening ear, falsely, as it happens—but what would you have? the whole is a delusion."

"Well, upon my word," cried Tommie, "it's real nasty of you to lay a pitfall like that for a chap. Just like those cads you meet sometimes, who want you to bet that such a word isn't in the dictionary, while all the time they've got the book in their pocket with the word in it."

The girl laughed; she enjoyed so much her victory over Tommie that she became quite sociable from that moment, her icy crust all thawed away.

We wandered through the fort, where there was nothing particular to see but the view from the ramparts, and then upon the grassy sward, where the soldiers from the fort were having a big wash in a little

pool that exists curiously enough at the very summit of the rock. By this time the voiture and its occupants had arrived at the top, and the old squire, fresh and jaunty, began to describe the various points we saw below us, the great digue or break-water with its strong forts at either end and a stronger still in the middle—a digue that was built, as to the foundations, in part of the hard granite and gneiss rock in which the naval docks and basins were excavated, and partly of hard primitive rock dug from quarries in the side of the cliff beneath us. The boatmen below are always wanting people to hire their boats to visit the digue, but we can see it all from the top of La Roule, with the naval fort and basins, the barracks, hospitals, and workshops, but not a sign of a ship of war except a few dismantled hulks. The fleet is away on its summer cruise or seeking adventures in Madagascar, and there is not even a solitary corvette in the port to give a touch of life to the scene.

As we descended the hill towards the town, Hilda fell behind the rest, and somehow I found myself by her side. She was changed indeed, but I should have known her anywhere. Was it possible that she did not recognise me? Her eyes rested indifferently upon me as if I had been part of the surrounding scenery, and then as I made some trifling remark about the descent, she brightened up and tried to interest herself in the conversation. But she was evidently preoccupied, and her politeness cost her an effort. Why did I not then make myself known, and appeal to the memory of our old love-passages? Something at the moment restrained me. I must have feared my fate too much, and then the opportunity was lost; we had joined the main body of the party. And Mr. Wyvern had joined us now, and evidently thought that as the representative of his chief, he should almost monopolise Hilda's society. And the poor girl seemed to acknowledge the claim, and did her best to be cheerful and bright in his presence. Young Courtney hardly had a chance of speaking to his cousin; perhaps he did not want a chance, for he was, or seemed to be, entirely engrossed in Miss Chancellor's conversation.

The chief pleasure in yachting is generally acknowledged to be the coming ashore, and hence the whole party on board the Sea Mew, with the exception of Mr.

Wyvern and his sister, and the old squire and Hilda, had agreed to dine at the table d'hôte of the chief hotel, and amuse themselves somewhere afterwards. The theatre was closed, but there was a circus in a big desolate place close by, where something like a fair was going on—stalls crammed with parcels of gingerbread, all to be attained by some combination of skill or chance. In all of these Tommie distinguished himself, knocking over dolls, and unfailingly hitting the bull's-eye in the mimic shooting-galleries, and finally carried off the grand prix of the Tombola, a huge ball of silvered glass as big as the head of giant Cormoran.

All this success excited great disapprobation among the stall-keepers. Monsieur was an expert, they said, with one accord, and it was not fair that he should engage in entertainments that were intended for honest bourgeois, their wives, and innocent children. Tommie was inclined to go on and break all the banks, sweeping away their reserve of gingerbread and nuts, and petrified sponge-cakes; but the townspeople took the side of the stall-keepers, and then some sailors came along from an English ship in the harbour, and were inclined to back up their countryman.

A row seemed imminent, but I managed to drag Tommie away out of the confusion, and safely into the circus, where an animated performance was going on. The regular circus routine having been gone through in the presence of a large audience of soldiers and sailors of the navy—the latter exquisitely neat in their blue and white, fine-looking young fellows, each with a rose in his breast—the arena was cleared for the grand military spectacle of the defeat of the Kroumirs. The young soldiers trooped off behind the scenes; they had all been admitted gratuitously in order to assist in the military spectacle.

At this interesting moment a carriage arrived to carry the ladies back to the yacht with a message from Mr. Wyvern that all must be on board by eleven, as the Sea Mew might have to sail with the tide. But we were determined to see the end of the performance, and, indeed, put down Mr. Wyvern's announcement as a little piece of extra officiousness.

By-and-by the band struck up the grand march of the Kroumirs, and presently a party of the same dashed upon the arena, a party of two at least, brandishing their spears and uttering fierce war-cries. Hardly had they gone when a

French officer appeared at the head of a picquet, and posted a sentry over a heap of old saddles that was supposed to represent a fountain. Exit the picquet, and the sentry begins his march up and down to slow music, which quivers and quavers in notes of warning and grief as those rascally Kroumirs creep up and drive a poniard into the heart of the poor soldier. Then the relief approaches and looks in vain for the sentry, till they almost tumble over his body. The dagger is discovered, and the French officer, raising it to the sky, imprecates vengeance upon the heads of the assassins.

Immediately, with a dexterous application of mats and screens, the arena is converted into the palace of the Bey of Tunis. The Bey appears to be a wicked old fellow with a penchant for bayadères, a troupe of whom appear and dance gracefully before him. All the eligible girls of Cherbourg, we are told, have been pressed into the service, but then the girls of Cherbourg don't appear to be designed by nature for bayadères, and the general effect is skinny and bony. But the Bey himself is perfection, a most respectable old gentleman, who claps his hands when he has had enough of the bayadères with quite Parisian grace. But his face is wrinkled with care. He has a world of trouble on his hands, for the French ambassador—or perhaps he is only a consul—is thundering at the gate. Enters the French ambassador in evening-dress; enters a stout French general in embroidered uniform and képi; enters, in violent excitement, the French capitaine, waving the Kroumir's dagger; enters the Italian chargé-d'affaires with a scarf of green, white, and blue, who prompts the Bey to resistance. But when an ultimatum is presented by the stout and fierce French general, the Bey trembles, turns pale; he falls back on his wily friend in the green tricolor; but he too has lost confidence. He may wring his hands, protest, but all is in vain. The Bey signs his submission, and exeunt the French in a triumphant tumultuous rush, while the bayadères pose themselves in attitudes of grief and submission. At this moment a placard is exhibited which brings down the house—"France will have her frontiers respected."

But still the Kroumirs have to be dealt with, and the arena is presently occupied with battles, marches, bivouacs, with a comic element in the shape of a bibulous

and vivacious private, who is continually on the point of bestowing a kick or a buffet upon his commanding officer, but who recovers his sense of discipline in time to convert the assault into a respectful salute. A pathetic element, too, is provided in the death of a soldier and his horse, the former sharing the last drop from his water-bottle with his faithful charger. The massacre of this gallant pair by a crowd of Kroumirs was the last drop in the cup of their iniquities. From that moment they were slaughtered like flies, a gallant vivandière of course performing prodigies of valour, amid fanfares of trumpets and incessant detonation of crackers, while the band burst forth into a triumphal march, and the audience rose en masse, while the sailors laughed and cheered at the exploits of their brethren in arms.

By the time we had turned out of the circus it was nearly midnight, and yet the town showed no sign of turning in for the night—or what was left of it. Half the population of the town was in the streets; children ran about and danced, while at all the open spaces a concourse of people had gathered, who were formed into a ring, and were dancing round and round, chanting some monotonous refrain, slowly at first, and then faster and faster, till the dance became a mad whirl, and the ring broke up by its own centrifugal force amid universal laughter and applause.

It was the St. Jean d'été, the feast of Midsummer Day, that the worthy Cherbourgeois were celebrating in this primitive fashion. Without a thought that he was participating in heathen rites, whose origin goes back to the early primitive life of mankind, without a serious thought, indeed, in his head, Tom Courtney plunged into the thick of the fun, clasping on one side the hand of a pretty dark-eyed little ouvrière, while on the other he hooked on to a dark-bearded savage-looking young fellow, presumably the girl's sweetheart. The little ouvrière did not seem to dislike the change of partners, and chatted gaily with Tommie during the intervals of the dance. But the young sweetheart was not so well pleased. Tommie's French was imperfect, and perhaps, in his happy ignorance of the language, he may have said more than he intended. Anyhow, the black-bearded young fellow took umbrage, words ensued, and then a slight scuffle, and then, in less time than it

takes to tell it, the sergents de ville were on the scene, and all the parties to the fray were marched off to the guard-house. The black-bearded young fellow, who was very excited, and in a highly dangerous mood, was detained for the night, while Tommie, who took the thing more quietly, was permitted to leave on our promise to appear next morning at the tribunal of correctional police, and we were favoured with the escort of a sergent de ville, nominally for our protection, but in reality, I fancy, to make sure of our not breaking our parole; a sergent who mounted guard patiently on the steps of the hotel, and seemed disposed to stay there all night.

Already, we were told, half-a-dozen urgent messages had come from the yacht, and one of the cabin-boys was awaiting our arrival to say that the Sea Mew was on the point of sailing, and that the pilot could wait no longer. There was no time to write, even to explain the situation, and we could only send a message excusing ourselves on the ground of an unexpected engagement on the following morning, and hoping to rejoin the Sea Mew at her next port of call.

And presently we heard her beating through the water in the silence of the night—a silence broken also by the distant cries of those who were still keeping up the St. Jean—the reflection of her lights pirouetting in the swell she raised in turning. Bells sounded, the engines went on full speed, and presently she shot quietly out of the harbour, and was lost in the indefinite haze beyond.

As for Tom Courtney, he was so contrite that it was impossible to reproach him, and, indeed, except for an excess of youthful spirits there was nothing to blame in his conduct. And this view was taken by the presiding magistrate next morning, who dismissed Tommie with a fine of two francs and a half and costs, which amounted to as much more. His enemy, now calmed and contrite, was mulct in the same amount, and as Tommie insisted on defraying the whole costs of the entertainment, the utmost harmony prevailed, and prisoners, guardians of the peace, and witnesses adjourned to the nearest café, where many bottles of wine were opened and drunk, to the health of everybody concerned, and to the continuance of the entente cordiale.

But, in the meantime, where was the Sea Mew?

AN ALIBI AND ITS PRICE.

A STORY IN THIRTEEN CHAPTERS.

BY THEO. GIFT.

CHAPTER II.

"GEORGE," said Mrs. Pentreath one day when Hetty had been living with her for nearly a year, "do you know that little girl is frightfully ignorant?"

The young vicar looked surprised.

"What girl? Not Esther—or Hetty, is it, you call her—Mavors? She always seems to me so wonderfully intelligent; and her music——"

"I am not talking about her music. I give her masters for accomplishments, and I must say she takes in what they teach her as readily as a cat does cream; but it's her general education. She knows nothing and has read nothing; can play a sonata by Beethoven, and never heard of Beethoven in her life, and can't read aloud the simplest book to me without asking a hundred questions about allusions and circumstances which every girl of sixteen ought to know by heart. Her poor father seems to have neglected her education shamefully; and at my age I am too old to be turned into a dictionary of reference. Don't you think you could help her a little—show her what books she ought to read, and make her read them? It would be a real charity both to the child and myself, and she is so intelligent that I believe you would find it pleasant."

"I dare say I should—at any rate I'll do it willingly," said Mr. Hamilton, and he had not assumed his post of teacher for many weeks before he did find it very pleasant, so pleasant indeed that before long those three hours in the week which he devoted to cramming Esther's young head with German and English literature, poetry, and philosophy, became the brightest of all the hundred and sixty-eight to him, and shed a rosy light over all the intervening ones.

It was the old story—the story of man and woman brought together as master and pupil, the man coming to teach and learning instead to love, the old story which we have all heard from our cradles; and if Mr. Hamilton managed to keep the secret of it to himself it was simply and solely for the reasons indicated in the story of his "friend." To him Hetty's youth and innocence were a shield stronger than any disapproval of parent or guardian, and he would have felt it a desecration of them to let in the hot breath of love or passion upon their virgin freshness.

In this way the girl grew up happy and breathing an atmosphere of love without analysing it, as a flower breathes sunshine; learning to stand by sick beds at her master's side; working in the parish; teaching in the schools; and revenging herself for her submission in these matters by a certain sweet tyranny over the vicar which was extremely pleasant and natural to both tyrant and victim, though the former at any rate would have felt highly indignant had she seen it wielded by any other woman.

And Mrs. Pentreath looked on, and being a woman of the world, saw more of Mr. Hamilton's secret than he at all guessed, and said nothing. In truth, what she saw did not displease her. George Hamilton was an excellent fellow, a scholar, and a gentleman; but he was her husband's nephew, and the Pentreaths, of course, did not belong to the same exalted sphere as the Bovillys. He might, perhaps, be allowed to do what would be impossible to Ernest, for instance; and though even so it would be a very good match for the child, Hetty was a good little thing, and Mrs. Pentreath would not grudge it to her. Besides, it would not take her far away, which was a consideration.

"I really couldn't do without her now, till Ernest brings me home a real daughter. Ah, if only that dear boy would settle down well!" the mother said to herself, sighing heavily as she re-read for the third time a letter which she had just received from India.

This was in June, and in the said letter there was no mention of any prospect that she would see her son shortly. Indeed, she knew that his regiment had still to get through nearly a year's service before it returned home; and therefore she might for a time dismiss thoughts of his settling down, and give her mind instead to the pretty idyll which she believed to be gliding to its completion under her nose.

"I shouldn't wonder if I were buying the child's trousseau by Christmas. Poor Jack! he ought to be obliged to me," the lady said to herself benignly.

Alas! long before Christmas, before, indeed, the August sun had finished reddening the sheaves of golden wheat, while the great white petals of the magnolia were opening day by day, and languid Londoners lay gasping for breath under the shade of the trees in Kew Gardens, a certain P. and O. steamer dropped quietly into dock in Southampton harbour, and one

hour later a telegram was in Mrs. Pentreath's hands, which upset in an instant all her thoughts of Hetty and the vicar, and replaced them by matter much more important.

For on board of that P. and O. steamer was Captain Pentreath. India is an idle place, and idleness is fruitful of flirtations, and folly of all sorts. Whether the young man's indiscretions had gone beyond folly this time was not known, and need not be asked. All that Mrs. Pentreath learnt was that he had contrived to get his name so mixed up with that of his colonel's wife, that, to prevent worse consequences, he had been urgently recommended to apply for leave, and exchange into a home-going regiment; and as for once in his life he had prudence enough to comply with this counsel, such strong interest was brought to bear on carrying it into effect, that in less than three weeks he had looked his last on Rumchandrepore and the too fascinating bungalow where he had wasted so many perilous hours, and was steaming slowly out of the Hooghly, en route for England.

It was a sad blow to Mrs. Pentreath, and she felt it sorely; but to the young man himself and a certain set among his friends it seemed rather a feather in his cap than otherwise. True, he had come home under a cloud so far as his own regiment and his chances of promotion were concerned, but a cloud with such a romantic lining as the unfortunate passion of a married lady of rank for a young unmarried officer had no glamour of disgrace about it; and when to this were added the culprit's exceeding good looks and chivalrous withdrawal from the field of temptation, the whole affair wore quite an heroic aspect in some eyes; and made even little Hetty Mavors gaze with timid wonder and admiration at the too dangerous Adonis.

Of course she knew nothing of the real facts of the story, nor was likely to do so; neither the vicar nor Mrs. Pentreath thinking such matters fit subject for a young girl's ears, while Ernest himself had grace enough not to allude to the subject at home.

The pretty idyll at the Lodge, however, came to an end all the same. Captain Pentreath was not the man to play second fiddle anywhere, least of all in his own home; and, considering that he had found that residence rather dull on previous occasions, he thought it a wise proceeding of his mother to have secured such a pretty

little girl as Hetty Mavors for his delectation at present. He approved of her greatly indeed, and told his cousin George so with a frankness which the latter found the reverse of flattering. She was so fresh, he said, so piquante, so full of fun, and yet so ridiculously innocent. It was worth something to make her open those big bewitching brown eyes of hers with a look of a pretty surprised baby; and then, what a delicious laugh she had! He raved about her, in fact; all the more, perhaps, for the coldness with which the vicar listened to his raptures, and proved he was in earnest in them by appropriating the girl to his own service from the very day of his return with the careless ease of a young Bashaw.

It was quite a matter of course. There was nothing special in it. Everyone waited on him at Guelder Lodge; everyone ran after him; everything was put aside for him. Hetty was one of the household; it seemed quite natural, therefore, that she should play his accompaniments, sing to him, mend his gloves, drive him to and from the station in his mother's pony-carriage, and fetch and carry for him generally; and, in return, he was very good to her, lounged beside her at the piano and in the garden, brought her bonbons and novels, taught her to ride, and even contrived that she should be included in sundry invitations to evening and garden parties which were given by his mother's grand friends in honour of his return, which seemed to Hetty a very paradise of dissipation.

It was not much use for the vicar to come to the Lodge now. Mrs. Pentreath, who was always wanting him at other times, wanted no one now she had got her son; and, as that young man was always in Hetty's neighbourhood, it was impossible to see one without the other.

In the vicar's eyes the pair seemed inseparable, and the girl as pleased with her new friend as he with her; and so it came to pass that his visits to the Lodge grew rare and more rare; and his words, when there, so few and cold, that Hetty herself noticed the change, and felt hurt and mortified by it, wondering vaguely if he thought it "beneath him" to take as much notice of her before his cousin as he had done before.

A coldness and formality sprang up between them, and so, just when the girl most needed a true friend, she was left instead to the guidance of her own ignorance and inexperience to steer her course

between the shoals of Captain Pentreath's attentions and the rocks of his mother's anger. To-day she had been tossed roughly from one to the other, and so cruelly buffeted in the second encounter, that her tender feelings were all bruised and quivering from the shock. It was a new thing to her to be spoken harshly to at all, and by Mrs. Pentreath, too, who was usually so kind and indulgent to her; but though this was grievous enough, and though it was still more grievous and dreadful that the cause of such speaking should be a man, and that man Mrs. Pentreath's son—even these causes of trouble would not have shamed and agitated her so much as the way in which Mr. Hamilton, her own friend and master, had been brought into the discussion.

True, he had not joined in his aunt's condemnation of her. Mrs. Pentreath had accused him of doing so, but he had denied the fact with indignation; and even in the storm of feeling which sent the girl flying to her room to sob her heart out in peace and solitude, she never dreamt of doubting his word; but in giving it he had shown, and shown quite openly, a readiness to look on her as the property of another person, and to make her over to that person, which hurt her in a way she hardly understood, and would have gone further to crush her bright nature than anything else if it had not been for one or two items which came back to her now in her solitude—the look in his face, for instance, when she burst into tears; those words, "I would cut off my right hand rather than hurt you by a pin-prick;" and, more than all, the story of—his "friend."

His "friend," indeed! Had not eye, and lip, and tone all told her that it was himself, that he was the lover, and she the girl spoken of? And if that were so, what mattered any one's unkindness, any one's folly? What mattered any other ill the world could send her; and why—why had she been such a little fool as to lose her head and her temper, and drive him away as she had done? Why had she run away herself, instead of waiting to hear what else he had to say? Might not the story have had a fresh chapter added to it, if she had been more sensible?

The afternoon sunshine was falling in long golden stripes through Hetty's window, turning to transparent flame the few fluttering crimson leaves which still dangled from the brown tangle of Virginia-creeper without, and touching with a fiery finger

the mass of ivy which garlanded the narrow casement and the girl's brown head bent down upon the sill. By-and-by she lifted it, and looked about her. She was tired of thinking and fretting, and, besides, her cheeks burned, and her eyes were swollen. Fresh air and exercise would take away these outward signs of her trouble at all events, and give her back the composure she needed, before she again met Mrs. Pentreath and her son at dinner. There was plenty of time for a good long walk before that, and the thought was no sooner in her mind than she hastened to carry it into execution, and only waiting to don hat and ulster, and tell the old butler that she was gone for a walk, she left the house, and took her way as rapidly as possible in the direction of the river, the quietest route at this time of the year that she could think of.

It was rather a muddy route to-day. There had been a great deal of rain lately, and the river was swollen so as even to overflow the towing-path in parts, and oblige her to take a wide circuit over soil soft enough to encase her stout little boots in a thick coating of mud, or to take flying leaps from stone to stone before she could resume her onward way. But Hetty was not the sort of girl to mind either a long jump or a little mud; and, for the rest, the sky was blue and bright, the air just sharp enough to be exhilarating, and the sun shone so gaily on shore and stream, on the yellow leaves of the willow and the copper-coloured leaves of the beech, on gnarled trunk and shallow, silvery pool, on the red roofs of dingy old Isleworth on the opposite bank of the river, and the brown sail splashed with orange of a big clumsy barge drifting slowly citywards, that by-and-by the girl's spirit began to brighten too, her step grew brisker, her head more erect. Once or twice she stopped to drink in a mouthful of the fresh cool breeze, or pick a few bright-coloured leaves from the withered hedgerow, or lift a sadly bloated frog out of the roadway, and deposit him on a stone for safety. When, as she was rising from the last-named task, her ear was caught by the rapid trample of a horse's feet in her rear, and stepping quickly on one side to avoid being run over, she heard herself greeted in tones too familiar to her to be pleasant at the present moment.

"I thought so," cried the rider as he checked his horse at the girl's side, and looked down with a gay smile into her

blushing face. "I thought I couldn't be mistaken in a certain little figure, even when seen from a distance, which would have made most other figures indistinguishable, so—— But Miss Mavors—Hetty! what is the matter?"

For Hetty was not only blushing, but there was a look of annoyance and distress in her face, which in conjunction with the traces of tears still visible about her eyes, might well provoke comment, more especially as there was nothing in any way distressing or alarming about the other face bent over her. It was a bright and handsome one, belonging to a young man of under thirty, fair, rather pale, and adorned with a long brown moustache, which, together with his trim soldierly figure, made him sufficiently taking in appearance to win a pleasant glance from any girl not very hard to please. Hetty, however, was vexed with herself at her own embarrassment, and answered a little pettishly:

"Nothing is the matter, Captain Pentreath. I was only startled by finding your horse so close behind me, and—and I never expected to see you here."

"No? Well, I did expect to see you," said the young officer gaily, as he dismounted and, throwing the reins over his arm, walked at her side. "I came home half an hour ago, found the house 'empty, swept, and garnished,' heard that madam was out driving and miss walking—'river-ways' old Hickson said—and so rode off river-ways myself in search of the latter. You see, therefore, mademoiselle, that if you were meditating running away, an idea which your present guilty air suggests to me, you may as well abandon the attempt, and resign yourself to being taken home again in honourable captivity."

Captain Pentreath spoke in a jesting tone, looking laughingly in the girl's eyes, as if expecting to see them laugh back in answer. It was not an unnatural thought. So late as yesterday, indeed, they might, and probably would, have done so, Hetty's eyes having a trick of laughing out at small notice, while she had got too used to Captain Pentreath making her the chief object of his attentions when at home to be either startled or flattered by them. Since this morning, however, everything had become different to her. She had tasted of the tree of knowledge, and bitter as the flavour of it might be to her, she could no longer feel or act as she had done in the happy days of her ignorance. Those two thoughts, so impossible in our guileless

childhood, so common in after life, "What does it mean, and what will other people think it means?" had been forced upon her mind; and being too naïve and inexperienced to conceal what was passing in it, she betrayed one of them by the question with which she answered Captain Pentreath's speech.

"But why did you come after me? Did you tell Hickson you would? I hope not—at least, I mean I——"

Captain Pentreath laughed again.

"I did not," he said. "I asked him in what direction the matter had gone. He said he thought it was to see Lady Carisfort. 'Ah, then,' said I, 'if I ride in the same direction, I shall most likely fall in with her,' and I departed. Do not look so glumly at me, Miss Mayors, for I told no fibs. If I had ridden along that road it is very probable that I should have met my lady mother. The only obstacle was that I didn't. I came after you instead."

"Then I wish you hadn't," said Hetty with more promptness than grammar, and with a look which said she meant it.

Captain Pentreath opened his eyes.

"That is rude," he said, "so I don't believe you. I think, on the contrary, that you are very properly grateful to your guardian's son, ergo, her representative, ergo, your guardian also, for taking the trouble to throw the much needed shield of his protection over a very imprudent young woman. You know you ought not to be wandering so far from home, Hetty."

"Indeed, Captain Pentreath, I do not. I am not a fine young lady with footmen to walk after me, and I have been used to going out alone ever since I was ten years old. I like it," said Hetty curtly, but with a lip which quivered nevertheless.

Was not his plea of guardianship the very one on which she had acted in the past, and thought so natural? Yet to-day she could not help fancying that he put it forward rather in jest than earnest, and with a mocking look in his blue eyes, which made her wonder if there had not been some ground for Mrs. Pentreath's anger after all; and whether the matter-of-course simplicity with which she had accepted the young officer's flatteries and attentions, and had entered into the spirit of easy familiarity which he had established between them from the beginning, had not something in it to-day perilously like flirtation.

Captain Pentreath shook his head at her with affected solemnity.

"Then I am sorry to hear it," he said, "for it is an improper liking and ought to be checked. You are not ten years old now, observe, and you are at least ten years prettier than you must have been at that tender age, therefore—— But, Hetty, you are looking quite grave! What's the matter? Have I offended you?"

"Only by talking nonsense, Captain Pentreath, and by calling me by my christian-name. I heard your mother tell you once that it was not usual, and—and you know you have no right to do so."

"I have as good a right as my parson-cousin, at any rate; and I noticed the day after my arrival that he called you by your christian-name, for I thought what a dear little one it was, and how well it suited the owner."

Hetty's face became very pink, but whether at the first part of his sentence or the second, Pentreath could not determine. She only answered the former.

"Mr. Hamilton has known me since I was quite a little girl, and taught me nearly everything I know. That is quite a different case."

"By Jove! so it seems, and I envy him accordingly. I wish I could teach you anything, or that you would teach me if that would do as well. Will you? I'll be a very docile pupil."

"I doubt it, Captain Pentreath—at any rate I'd rather not try."

"And I wish you would. Do try me, Hetty. You couldn't give me any greater pleasure than telling me to do something for you. Don't you know it?" and Captain Pentreath drew a little nearer to the girl's side, bending his handsome head till the fair moustache almost brushed the dark curls about her temples.

Someone coming along at the other side of the leafless quick-set hedge which bordered the towing-path saw the couple at the moment, and stopped short, as if startled; but Hetty had turned her pretty glowing face with sudden animation to her companion, and unconscious of a witness, said quite eagerly:

"Do you really mean that? If you did it would make me very happy."

"I mean everything I say to you. Try me, that is all," said Captain Pentreath fervently.

Hetty looked up, a saucy smile in her eyes meeting the admiring one bent on her.

"Then will you please get on your horse again and ride on in the direction in which you were going. I told you I came

out by myself because I wanted to be alone, and I would rather go back so. I would indeed."

It was not the reply Captain Pentreath had expected, and he looked visibly annoyed as he exclaimed:

"Why, Hetty, what's up? Have I done anything to vex you?" then remembering the smile in her eyes: "Ah, but I see you don't mean it. You are only teasing me, you provoking little witch, as if you didn't know that no man in his senses would go in one direction when you are going in another."

"But I know nothing of the sort, and I want one man to do it. Captain Pentreath, I am not joking, indeed. I do mean it."

"Then, Hetty, I must have offended you. What have I done?"

"Nothing at all. You have not offended me."

"Then why want to drive me from you just because we chance to be taking our exercise along the same road, as we have done a score of times before?"

Hetty's face was crimson. Had they been out together so often? She had not thought of it at the time, but now she had a vague remembrance of something cold and displeased in Mrs. Pentreath's manner when she came in rather late one day from a walk accompanied by Captain Pentreath. She answered briskly enough, however:

"Do you call it chance when, as you told me just now, you came this way on purpose to find me?"

"And to bring you home! It is getting late, Hetty, for you to be out."

"I know it, and I am going home now; but please let me go alone. Please don't come with me. Indeed I have a reason for asking you."

* That the girl was in earnest now the most sceptical person could not have doubted. Her pretty face was quite pale again, and her eyes wore a beseeching expression which no generous man could have resisted.

Captain Pentreath, however, was not famed for generosity where women were concerned. He kept at her side as she turned, and only asked:

"What is the reason, Hetty? Don't be silly and mysterious. Tell me."

"I cannot, Captain Pentreath. Please do as I ask you."

"What, when you won't do anything I

ask! That isn't fair. But I see what it is quite well, Hetty—my mother has been talking some confounded rubbish to you."

"You ought not to speak of your mother in that way, Captain Pentreath."

"Well, but isn't it true? Hasn't she?"

"I will not tell you. I don't want to speak of your mother at all. Do you forget that I am her companion, and owe all I have to her kindness and generosity?"

"No, by Heavens! nor that she owes all the pleasantness her house has to your company. Egad, she wouldn't keep me long here without it. Don't you know that?"

Hetty made no answer.

"Because you may as well do so. It is the truth, and so if she is going to bully you and make you disagreeable to me—"

"I don't want to be disagreeable to you, Captain Pentreath. I only—only—" But Hetty's lip was quivering. She began to realise how helpless she was, and her eyes filled with tears. Even Captain Pentreath was touched by the sight of her distress.

"You only want to drive me from you," he said pathetically. "Well, Hetty, you know your power, and however it pains me to obey you I will not pain you by the contrary. You must make it up to me some other time, and I can promise you one thing—if the mater is at the bottom of this, she sha'n't congratulate herself on the result of it."

And then he did mount his horse and ride away, while Hetty pursued her homeward route with quickened steps. She had nearly reached the Lodge gates when she saw another gentleman, a familiar figure in a low felt hat and Roman collar, coming up the dusky road under the horse-chestnut trees as if to meet her. It was George Hamilton, and involuntarily her steps quickened, and she put out one little hand as if to greet him sooner. To her great surprise, however, he did not stop or speak, but looking at her full with a kind of hard, unsmiling severity, lifted his hat, and, turning abruptly away, crossed the road to the opposite side.

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